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## **Are college students prepared for conflict? : a review on conflict resolution among college students**

### **Abstract**

The following is a review of the research on the topic of conflict resolution in college age students. All of the research involved used college students as their participants. The purpose of this review was to find out if college students constructively resolve conflicts in their individual and professional lives. The research reveals that there are various factors that play a key role in how this age group comes to their resolution strategies. Nevertheless, students appear to use some nonconstructive techniques. However, constructive methods to be aware of are discovered as well as skills that may offer insight further into this topic. There is a call for more research in this field to truly and accurately gauge the overall benefit of ensuring good conflict managers in this age group.

# **ARE COLLEGE STUDENTS PREPARED FOR CONFLICT?**

***A REVIEW ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION AMONG COLLEGE AGE  
STUDENTS***

**MARC J. DALMASSO**

This Research Paper by: Marc J. Dalmasso

Entitled: Are College Students Prepared for Conflict?  
A Review on Conflict Resolution Among College Students

has been approved as meeting the  
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### **Abstract**

The following is a review of the research on the topic of conflict resolution in college age students. All of the research involved used college students as their participants. The purpose of this review was to find out if college students constructively resolve conflicts in their individual and professional lives. The research reveals that there are various factors that play a key role in how this age group comes to their resolution strategies. Nevertheless, students appear to use some nonconstructive techniques. However, constructive methods to be aware of are discovered as well as skills that may offer insight further into this topic. There is a call for more research in this field to truly and accurately gauge the overall benefit of ensuring good conflict managers in this age group.

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## **Introduction**

An important topic that is valuable to society is how children develop skills on how to resolve conflicts, mainly interpersonal conflicts. Along the same lines, it is also valuable to see how those children change their strategies as they pass into adolescents and how such skills may change. However, one area that has not received as much attention is what types of decisions' college age students make when they are presented with conflict situations. We hope as a society that learning how to resolve conflict constructively is essential for teens as they transcend into adulthood. Conflict resolution skills they learn will help them make the best decisions to resolve problems in their daily lives. As we will see in the rest of this paper, this may not always be the case.

Developing ways to handle conflict can be thought of as a part of the growing process that should come naturally. Unfortunately, it may be the case that negative choices are used frequently by young adults in this age bracket. For instance, one negative reaction to conflict, and probably the most damaging, is violence. Bell & Forde (1999) found that the use of violence is greater among younger people, particularly for men in high intensity conflicts when the perpetrator is similar in age and gender. Sandy and Cochran (1990) also stated poor resolution in that, more than fifty percent of adolescent conflicts are resolved by standoff or withdrawal. Unilateral power assertion is used more frequently than negotiation, which is the least used method of resolution. These are examples of what will be examined in this paper. It is true that not everyone resorts to violence in conflict situations, some use revenge, getting even, or ignoring as ways of



dealing with conflict. Thus, it seems crucial to focus on ways to foster and promote positive forms of conflict resolution, such as negotiation among college age students. Raider, Coleman, and Gerson (1991) describe negotiation as a collaborative deal where each side thoroughly communicates its perspective and arrives at understanding of the other side. Baskerville (1993) sees the importance to understand that disagreements can be a healthy and creative exercise in the growth and development of an individual, team or project and can ultimately strengthen relationships.

## **Statement of the Problem**

According to Baskerville (1993), conflict is an inevitable part of life. Since we all tote baggage of our personal values, experiences, beliefs and perceptions with us everywhere, there's always a chance that our values will clash with those of someone else. Since this is clearly the case with all of the people around us day to day, positive strategies can make life a lot easier and more harmonious for us. However, positive ways to resolve conflicts are not used often enough. As stated above, ineffective strategies such as violence, revenge, ignoring the problem, anger and passivity can take their toll on people as they go through life. Negative ways of reacting to conflict become less adaptive as children go to college and begin their adult lives. It cannot be assumed that good strategies will be in place, and that most, if not all, college students will have them. Unfortunately, this is also the age where young adults get away from home for the first time and their abilities to manage conflict are put to the test.

The issue of ineffective techniques used to solve conflict during the college years is focused on in this paper because if proper strategies are not adopted by or during this time, they could be used for the rest of the person's life. This may not sound like the most demanding topic to look at but consider this; Belle and Forde (1999) found that in the domestic abuse scenario, American college students said they would not call the police, even in situations in which a physical assault took place. The most common reason for not reporting was that these disputes were too personal. Even when force is used, people still have difficulty defining domestic abuse as crime. It is clear then if approaches to

conflict remain unchanged, they can have negative effects on people as they grow older.

Conflict management among college students is an important topic to address.

## **Significance of the Problem**

The reason for looking into this topic is to understand the process by which we resolve conflicts. The result of the conflict is steered by the strategies we employ during the process. It is significant to everyone around us in our lives. To resolve conflict effectively is an important life skill that needs to be learned especially during the college years.

Use of ineffective conflict resolution strategies can have many consequences. If revenge is used in situations, a person could alter the way others view them as well as keep an unhealthy feeling in the person's mind. It is not easy to maintain the anger it takes to plan revenge. Violence can lead to personal injury as well as legal ramifications. Being passive and ignoring conflicts can lead to much anxiety and a sense of helplessness.

Being able to use positive techniques can make our lives easier. We all experience varying degrees of conflict and we handle conflict in different ways. The art of resolving conflict in a win, win situation is very desirable. The ability to talk through a problem with another individual can lead to better understanding of the conflict as well as the other person. A person who can defuse a conflict from violence possesses an important life skill. Being able to speak your mind in a way that does not insult or antagonize others can be vital to people's lives. Even though everyone we deal with will not have the same strategies, the positive abilities can lead us through to be successful in conflict situations.

## **Definition of Terms**

(Webster's Dictionary 1988)

- 1). College Age - Post high school age individuals who are primarily between the ages of 18 to 23. These are the ages to look from a freshman to a senior (approximately).
- 2). Conflict - Refers to a disagreement or collision as in interests or ideas and emphasizes the process rather than the end.
- 3). Resolution - The act or process of resolving something or breaking it up into its constituent parts or elements.
- 4). Character - A distinctive trait, quality, or attribute; characteristic.
- 5). Passive - Influenced or acted upon without exerting influence or acting in return; inactive, but acted upon.
- 6). Aggression - Ready or willing to take issue or engage in direct action; bold and active, pushy.
- 7). Violence - Physical force used so as to injure, damage, or destroy; extreme roughness of action.
- 8). Revenge - To inflict damage, injury, or punishment in return for; to retaliate.
- 9). Ignore - To disregard deliberately; pay no attention to, refuse to consider; to let a problem exist with no action.
- 10). Withdraw - One person refuses to continue in conflict exchange.
- 11). Psychoticism - Having a personality that is somewhat disorganized and a probability of skewed reality.

## **Organization**

In this chapter, the main focus of this paper and its importance were presented. Now that we have introduced the topic to look at, we must move to more evidence. The second chapter will present a review of the conflict resolution literature. In the third and final chapter, practical implications for constructive resolution of conflict will be addressed. The hope will be to point out the implication of such decision making and possibly identify programs that help instill these techniques.

## **Conflict Resolution Literature**

This chapter offers a review of the literature on conflict resolution and is organized in five parts. Definitions and an overview of what conflict resolution is are looked at. Then we will look at the conflict process. Next, a historical background will be examined. Fourth, reactions to conflict are discussed. Finally, reasons why college students are important to study are proposed. All of the research in this and the following section used college students as their participants.

### ***DEFINITION AND OVERVIEW OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION***

Conflict has been defined by Webster's Dictionary (1988) as, a disagreement or collision as in interests or ideas and emphasizes the process rather than the end. This is a broad definition that adequately describes what we want to delve into further. Conflicts come in all areas of daily life and can happen at any time. How conflict is resolved then is the critical part. Resolution is defined by Webster's as, the act or process of resolving something or breaking it up into constituent parts or elements. This definition outlines what good conflict resolution should entail. Many times conflicts are resolved by examining the separate parts of conflict and then create agreement between sides.

Conflict happens on all levels of life from the mundane to the critically important, both among nations and individuals. A good real world example of conflict is the situation between Israel and Palestine. Two sides with very strong beliefs that clash together and create hostility and blood shed. Another example of interpersonal conflict could be being short change at the grocery store when the clerk says that he has given you the correct

amount of change back. One final example of conflict could arise when two employees have different ideas on how to make their company more money and believe their program is the only way to be successful. From big to small, conflicts arise wherever we look.

No attempt will be made to offer a resolution strategy to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict but, ways to resolve the latter two examples will be discussed in this chapter. A customer could try to resolve the change conflict by yelling at the employee while the employee simply withdraws from the conflict and gives the customer change. Or the two parties could negotiate, count the drawer and verify who was correct. The business example could be resolved through competition where both sides come up with scenarios showing how their opponents' theory will not work. They could also negotiate on a team like structure to pinpoint which program will be the best for the company. These are examples of resolution that all can happen. It may be evident that some are best for all parties involved while some are better for only one side. Keeping this in mind, we can move to the next area that will show us the conflict process and some historical ideas of conflict resolution and how they operate in the world we live in.

### *THE CONFLICT PROCESS AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND*

Most research in the area of conflict resolution comes from the business world. One model that has been adapted from the business world is the dual concern model. Two main categories emerge from dealing with conflict strategy. One is competition and the other cooperation. Deutsch in 1973 first presented interpersonal conflict strategies along a single dimension of cooperation vs. competition, (Ritov, Drory, 1996). This model formed a good base for particular strategies to form. Thomas (1975), and Rahim and



Bonoma (1979), preferred to classify the cooperation and competition discussion as concern for others vs. concern for self. This is where the Dual Concern Model of conflict resolution gets its meaning.

Five distinct conflict management strategies have emerged from the dual concern model. These are used by a variety of researchers in the area and give us a clear understanding of what people generally will do when in a conflict situation. Ritov and Drory (1996) defined them as follows.

Collaboration is the first and it is working for an integrative solution considering the others' needs without compromising one's own. Competing is attempting to dominate and attain one's needs without concern for other's needs. Accommodating is catering for the needs of the other party while sacrificing one's own. Avoiding is refraining from any confrontation, thus disregarding the needs of both the self and the other. The fifth and final is compromising which is searching for an intermediate position meeting the opponent half way.

Another way of looking at these five is the perspective given by Arnold and Carnevale (1997). This could also be seen as an example that applies to a business setting but has the same principles. More specifically, the five steps are relevant to the negotiation strategy. Arbitration is a situation in which a binding decision is made by a third party. Mediation is where a neutral third party assists the two disputants in reaching a voluntary agreement. Struggle is seen when disputants threaten and take direct action against one another. Avoidance is where the disputants avoid interacting, leave the situation, or both. The fifth and final is inaction. This is when the disputants do nothing

about the conflict. These five different responses offer an insight into what strategies are used in interpersonal and business conflict situations.

The relevance of the Dual Concern Model to conflict resolution is summed up by statements made by Sorenson, Morse, and Savage in 1999 that high concern for self combined with low concern for others yields an obliging strategy. Both high concern for self and others produces an integrating, synergistic strategy. The combination of low concern for self and others produced avoiding. Most researchers then find that moderate concern for self and others yields a compromising strategy. In many conflict situations, how a person feels about others in a situation will guide which Dual Concern Method will be adopted. Most all conflict resolution research deals with the Dual Concern Model in one form or another. It is therefore vital to consider this dynamic in order to understand how decisions are made in conflict situations.

### *REACTIONS TO CONFLICT*

This section examines or describes some of the factors that help shape reactions to conflict.

According to Peterson (1983), negative feedback, or criticism, has been shown to be a reliable cause of interpersonal conflict. Rudawshy, Lundgren, and Grasha (1999) say that negative feedback has also been shown to lead to anger, which is in turn related to conflict. When examining students' open-ended accounts of instances of receiving negative feedback, there was considerable evidence of interpersonal conflict and negative affect. This underscores the importance of teaching students how to handle negativity in a productive manner. This is what authors' say is likely to lead to more negative affect.

These authors also say that highly negative feedback is likely to lead to more negative affect because the feedback cannot be brushed away as inconsequential, and because it may feel like an attack from the sender to the receiver. Lundgren, Rudawsky and Grasha (1999) proposed in turn that competitive and collaborative resolution strategies would be changed to more competitive because of such feedback and affect. They found that greater negative affect led to more competition, or concern for self. Negative feedback was the same unless the relationship between the two disputants was close. Interestingly they also found a gender difference where women were more likely to both compete and collaborate than men.

Ritov and Drory (1996) ran an experiment using the key five strategies discussed earlier. Their study focuses on the role of ambiguity in strategic choice, concerning interpersonal conflict in organizations. They reported three major findings. First, ambiguity led to more collaboration and did not affect the strategies of avoidance, accommodation or compromise. Ambiguity therefore did not lead to more competition. Second, as the likelihood of having a positive outcome increases, collaboration increases and competition decreases. The reverse is true when success is not likely. Finally, under ambiguity, inclination to compete decreased while inclination to collaborate increased. These findings showed us that college students adopted the more positive forms of conflict resolution as opposed to totally breaking down, when a clear solution was not evident.

Weitzman (2001) looked at a similar area examining college students and their methods of resolving conflict from interpersonal to business. She found that half of all

strategies used were low level unilateral strategies, e.g., giving in to the demands of the other person. This suggests that there may be a lack of ability in handling conflict, especially in the work setting, that could be damaging. Weitzman call for the possibility of developing a program that guides students into the school-to-work transition.

An important factor to consider at in this discussion is violence. In another experiment conducted in 1996, Zillmann and Weaver investigated the role of violence on conflict resolution. They found that males with high psychoticism, which would be estimated as half of college age males, viewing of violent media significantly affected their resolution strategies. To be more specific, the students would be more likely to condone violence as an acceptable means of resolving conflict. This, is potentially a dangerous form of dealing with conflict, for all involved. Gender difference showed that females in either low or high psychoticism were not affected by the viewing. Similarly, males with low psychoticism were not significantly affected. The major implication this study offers is that males with this personality type may be adopting negative forms of resolution that are detrimental to all involved.

The 1999 Bell and Forde study, which was referred to earlier, investigated conflict resolution among college students using a factorial survey was to gauge how students would react to school-related conflict, street crime, confrontation in a leisure setting, and domestic abuse. One of their goals was to evaluate how students would use third party agencies such as police, to help solve volatile conflicts. As with Zillman and Weaver's study, Belle and Forde reported violence as a common occurrence in male confrontations. Calls to police were more likely with male-female confrontations but with domestic

abuses, police were rarely seen as an acceptable mediator. The authors suggested a need for situational analysis for an improved understanding of violence and the role of formal agencies in dispute processes. The idea that violence is used as a form of conflict resolutions is an area of concern as well.

Hammock and O'Hearn (2002) investigated what variables are key to negative behaviors in conflict resolution strategies of males and females in domestic relationships. They report that when females use techniques that are more obliging and less avoiding, the higher their use of psychological aggression. For males, the key predictor for the same rate of psychological aggression was dictated by weekly alcohol intake. The more alcohol drank per week raises the level of psychological aggression. These factors are relevant because they point to what characteristics and strategies lead to domestic conflict in college age students.

Groups are becoming a critical part of business and life more and more. It would be valuable to know how individuals respond to conflict while in groups. This is what Devine focused on in his 1999 study. He found that controversy with-in the group over the strategy to employ was strongly related to interpersonal conflict between members. As in previous studies, using relatively simple choice tasks, groups exhibited biased information sampling and generally failed to identify the best course of action suggested by their collective information. He pointed to a need for more work such as this because groups should be able to find the best avenues. His results show that interpersonal conflict seems to get in the way of such success. It therefore becomes valuable to teach groups better tactics and conduct more research.

In relation to groups, Whitney and Miller (2002) looked at how students would resolve conflicts in a recreational setting that discussed restrictions on beaches. They found that students were unwilling to compromise if the perceived consensus was what they wanted to participate in, e.g., students would not cooperate if they thought their activity was permitted on the beach. They also found that students were unmovable if there were other groups already involved in the activity they were about to partake in. This study is valuable because it points to the group mentality. If someone else can do it, then I can to. This could be a harmful approach to adopt because rules are important. There could be consequences to such conflicts and breaking restrictions may be detrimental.

Trust is an important factor that is relevant to this topic, as well as how reputations can affect decisions made in strategic resolution. Wilson and Sell (1997) conducted a study that investigated whether communication and reputational information and solving collective action problems by using laboratory experimental methods to disentangle the separate effects of both signals and past behavioral information. They found that having the more information about past behavior of subjects decreased the level of contribution to the public good. They also pointed how quickly group mistrust can lead to a potential increase in conflict. Factors such as trust can help shed light on some characteristics on the topic of conflict resolution. Specifically the findings underscore the failures of groups in decision making when dealing with conflict dilemmas.

One additional area to consider is the role of culture in resolving conflict.

Gabrielidis, Stephan, Ybarra, Pearson and Villareal (1997) studied cultural differences

among people in Mexico and the United States. They focused on the Dual Concern Model as a base for their results. They found that the Mexican culture preferred conflict resolution strategies that emphasized concern for outcomes of others (accommodation and collaboration) to a greater degree than the students from the United States. They also pointed out that avoidance may show a concern for others in the Mexican culture where it is seen as concern for self in American culture. It is interesting to see that we are already predisposed to a culture where concern for others may not be a more significant factor than concern for self. This points out why methods do not always lead to the most productive ways to effectively manage conflict.

### *WHY COLLEGE STUDENTS*

Factors such as the Dual Concern Model, violence, groups, ambiguity, reputations, mistrust, and culture appear to be critical sections of what conflict resolution is to a college student. The next part in this review will examine why these college age students are important to study. Since some strategies do not produce the most positive outcomes, conflict resolution strategy in college age students is an important topic to study.

Additionally, and most importantly, college students in this age group are the next generation of this country. It is valuable to spend some time analyzing what types of decisions college students make when confronted with conflict. If they choose destructive means more frequently, we need to research ways to develop potential skills so they can lead us in the next generation.

In the next chapter, we will focus on two non-constructive and two constructive methods of conflict resolution used by college age students. Implications for fostering

constructive conflict resolution will be discussed, as well as some research that shows some helpful ways of leading this age group to better decisions in confrontations.



## Implications

In this chapter, examples of both nonconstructive and constructive forms of conflict resolution will be evaluated. The next section will evaluate positive skills of conflict resolution and point out some conflict situations. Finally, overall implications of the research will be examined.

### *NONCONSTRUCTIVE FORMS*

An example of a nonconstructive form of conflict resolution is aggression, or use of violence. This has the highest probability of long term effects that can be mentally as well as physically debilitating. Belle and Forde (1999) found that college students consider aggression to be legitimate in a large number of circumstances. That is, many college students see aggressiveness as an acceptable way to solve conflicts in many situations. Similarly, college age males from the Zillman and Weaver (1996) study condoned violence as a means to resolve conflict. They say that Some men of this age group are sufficiently nonempathic not to be distressed by the victimization involved and manage to bring moral considerations in line with their dispositional preference. A small number of college students who believe that violence works as a conflict resolution strategy, could have dire consequences to society if good strategies are not adopted. This strategy complicates a conflict situation rather than mitigate it.

Competition is something that can be viewed as advantageous under most circumstances. Most believe that competition will lead to better production on the parts of individuals involved. However, in a conflict situation, competition may have negative

consequences. Rudawsky, Lundgren, and Grasha (1999) concluded that negativity of feedback was strongly associated with negative affect, which led to more competition. As was stated before, competition is associated with a concern for self as described in the Dual Concern Model. They also state that negative effect was the only direct predictor of competition. In situations where conflicts arise, negativity is probably a frequent characteristic by some party. The idea that competition as a strategy can be predicted by negativity points out that competition can be a nonconstructive form of resolution. These authors also noted that when such negativity is aroused, a common competitive strategy that emerges is one with orally aggressive tactics such as name calling. They recommended further research in the area of negative feelings and their impact on choice of conflict resolution strategies. Although competition may be an acceptable way to produce in most places of life, it may hinder college age students who find themselves in a conflict situation.

### *CONSTRUCTIVE FORMS*

There are certain methods and strategies that could be classified constructive, some of which will be discussed in this section. It can be formulated that communication is vital to many aspects of our lives. In other words, without such communication, breakdowns would occur all around us. At the same time, cooperation is a term that generally suggests that two parties are working together to solve something. Cooperation is an example of a constructive conflict resolution strategy. However, communication is vital to producing cooperation, especially in a group setting. Gorden and Bernstein (2000) found that when group members could not communicate with one another, they gradually

learned that it does not pay for them, as individuals to participate. College students showed that when communication was not allowed at the group level interaction, they did not participate with the group. This shows a lack of cooperation that produced little good. But, when within group communication was allowed, its overall effect was to increase, in fact double, individual contribution or participation as compared with the no-communication control condition. Communication and cooperation go hand in hand and they are both key elements in solving many conflicts.

Another good and mature form of conflict resolution is mediation. Although at first glance, this may sound as though two sides have failed at solving a problem by themselves but mediation is sometimes very necessary and should not be viewed as derogatory. Goldstein (1999) described mediation as a noun that involves, to some extent, making private behavior more public. Actions that might typically be confined to private settings are carried out, or discussed, in the presence of an outsider. Mediation merely brings in a third party to help shed light on a conflict or situation where both sides differ. This could be seen as constructive because a third party has a unique place to help solve problems. The third party should, of course, be neutral and not raise the already high emotionality of the conflict. Emotions play a major part in such a strategy. Most constructive approaches to mediation encourage the expression of emotions, and emphasize face-to-face sessions in which the parties deal with each other directly. If a mediator can bring disputing parties together and “mediate” the situation to resolution, both parties will leave the engagement knowing more about themselves and their combatants. It should not be looked at as failing when mediation is needed because the

overall result may leave both sides with a greater understanding of the conflict they were involved in. As for who assumes the mediator role, any of the students around who are neutral as well as professors, and bosses who can help guide the process.

One final example of a constructive form of conflict resolution was demonstrated by Sanderson and Karetzky (2002). They looked at dating relationships and assessed conflict resolution strategies in romantic or intimate conflicts. Their results were encouraging. They found that individuals who engaged in open discussion as well as compromise, were more likely to successfully resolve conflicts. Discussion and compromise then can be seen as constructive forms of conflict resolution, specifically in dating relationships.

### *POSITIVE SKILLS AND KNOWING CONFLICT SITUATIONS*

Next, we will delve into some research that points to positive awareness of conflict resolution. The following studies point to some avenues that produce favorable outcomes for parties involved in conflict. Techniques that can foster good strategies among college student need to be evaluated and taught to the students so that they will be equipped to deal with the real world. These studies will also look at conflict situations to be aware of.

Using college students, Schweitzer and Dechurch (2001) examined what molds conflict strategies in the business world. The researchers emphasized the need to focus on the process and what it leads to. In many cases, the influence of problem description on the negotiation process may be quite subtle. For example, even the assignment of negotiator roles, such as seller or buyer, can cue gain or loss scenarios, which in turn can influence conflict frame adoption. Conflict frame merely means conflict strategy. These

authors pointed out that negotiators should recognize that framing effects can represent both opportunities and threats. Frames have important consequences for the course of negotiations and negotiators should be trained to recognize different frames and understand the strategic implications their use can have. College students need to learn how to reach in situations of conflict because they will be better prepared to make the wisest decisions.

Druckman (1994) conducted a meta-analysis that focused on what situations lead to a side being immovable in a conflict is presented. He delineated seven situations where a side will stick to their position. Bargainers will stick to their guns when they are accountable to constituents who are responsible for deciding on the division of a reward and do not expect future interactions with their opponents; when they prepare strategies in cohesive groups for a negotiation in which few issues are being contested and a deadline exists; when relatively competitive orientations are induced during the bargaining by superiors and linked explicitly to bargaining strategies; when they perform before an audience that creates face saving pressures; when the differences between positions on important issues are derived from long-held social attitudes; when there are no or weak time limits to reach an agreement; and when they are faced with a tough or exploitative opponent and his or her intentions are easy to discern. Although these scenarios are based on a business conflict setting, they bear similarities to the realm of all conflict. These situations could possibly be applied to help students in every day situations as well as what to expect when they reach their careers. Knowing when an opposition is more likely to be

unchangeable in their stances gives insight to which appropriate resolution strategies should be applied.

In one more negotiation study by Stultt-Macher, Gillespie, and Champagne (1998), a meta-analysis was conducted to see how time pressure may affect the choice of negotiation strategy. Results of their study provide some possible ways to prepare college students to be aware of the possible situations that may arise during a conflict exchange. The authors note that in terms of practical implications, it seems that imposing time pressure in conflicts may indeed be a double-edged sword. Consider a labor management dispute that has a history of inflexible behavior on both sides, a multi-issue agenda, and the likelihood of a limited victory. In this case, the application of pressure may foster agreement but would create more contention than the lack of pressure. In contrast, we consider a dispute where parties are more flexible to the demands of the opponent, have a simple negotiation, and incentive for agreeing, time pressure should increase cooperation as well as fostering agreements. Cooperation generally leaves sides content and seeing situations where this can be fostered are advantageous.

One final study investigated approaches to introducing conflict. Schwenk (1990) specifically examined three specific variables in a meta-analysis. The first is Dialectical Inquiry (DI) which involves offering a prevailing plan of action and working through its elements. Then an alternative approach is offered. The second is called Devil's Advocacy (DA) and only offers a critique of the prevailing plan without any compliment. The third and final approach is to use an expert approach that does not start a conflict, only outlines the plan to use. Schwenk's hypothesis was that both DA and DI should be more beneficial

to solving a problem than only giving subjects the E approach. His results suggested that the DA is more effective than the E approach in general. The controversy introduced by Devil's Advocacy can improve decision making. Also, the superiority of the DI to the E approach was not demonstrated in experiments using ill structured tasks. This study proposes that using approaches where an alternative is offered at the beginning of a conflict may lead people to resolve the situations better. It is also important for college students to be aware of such avenues to use to be prepared for the tough situations that undoubtedly will arise in the future.

### *OVERALL IMPLICATIONS*

Conflict resolution is obviously an important aspect of the growing up process. The research studies reviewed point to the need for college students to be more aware of conflict situations that arise. They also instruct us that many times college students may choose avenues that are nonconstructive and need to be evaluated further. Granted, every situation is different and the opposite party will play a significant role in the course of action taken.

Research has also provided many ways to be prepared for conflicts as they arise. The studies have pointed to specific strategies that can lead to positive outcomes. The need for positive outcomes was presented with considerable amount of aggressive decision making used by males in this age group. Students need to be trained in such strategies to avoid violence and aggressiveness as a means of resolution of conflict.

The environment also plays a role in what strategies students will opt for. It becomes important then for students to be taught to pay attention to these factors as they

can alter the outcome of situations. With so many opportunities in college, the need for classes or assessment of resolution strategies should be available to all. Such opportunities will have beneficial outcomes for the student as well as society as they enter into the business or real world.



## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this paper has focused on the topic of conflict resolution and what types of decisions college students make when presented with either interpersonal or professional conflicts. Throughout the paper, factors that play important roles in what strategies are used to solve conflicts were discussed. In certain cases, it appears that college students do not always make productive moves while embedded in conflict. Violence is most likely the most detrimental strategy that is used.

Two examples of non-productive forms of conflict resolution as well as two methods that would be more constructive were introduced. Negotiation and cooperation were offered as good examples that students should work toward conflict resolution. Concern for others and concern for self play a significant part in our strategies. College students can benefit from concern for others to leave conflicts more favorable to both parties.

Much research in this area unfortunately focused on the pre-college age population. The final recommendation then is that more research is needed within this population to fully understand this topic. I believe that by the time people move on to college, they are expected to be good conflict managers. Unfortunately, this may not always be the case so there is a need for research to examine decisions made as well as ways to teach students the correct ways of problem solving.

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